MONTEREY NEWS

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The Town

by Maggie Leonard

Sylbert Resigns from Select Board

The Select Board reconvened after the holidays on Monday, January 9, to face new controversy as Select Board member Jon Sylbert filed a complaint with the Attorney General's office (AG) regarding what he believes to be a violation of the Open Meeting Law. In the complaint to the AG Sylbert contends that the two other Select Board members, chair Wayne Burkhart and Scott Jensen, "unintentionally deliberated and expressed their opinions outside of open session, to negotiate with employees in executive session." The disagreement stems from the Select Board agenda item for Monday, January 9: 6–7 pm. Executive Session: Employees, Finance Committee; collective bargaining/contract negotiations with nonunion personnel; will reopen to the public at 7 pm.

Sylbert submitted a detailed letter to the Select Board supporting his contention about the Open Meeting Law violation, stating that it was misleading to post the agenda in this manner: "The meeting must start in open session, and then, if a motion is made and seconded to go into executive session, it must be discussed and voted on." Sylbert goes on to say that he objects

(*cont. on p. 2*)

Monterey, Egremont, New Marlborough, Schools Threatened with Closure

It's the issue that will not go away. Once again the Southern Berkshire Regional School District (SBRSD) School Committee and Superintendent Michael Singleton are considering closing the village schools in Monterey (early K, K), New Marlborough (pre-K– grade 4, attended by many Monterey students), and Egremont (K–grade 1) and consolidating all of the district elementary students into Undermountain School in Sheffield.

(*cont. on p. 2*)

Monterey School students (cw from left: Caden Strickland, Charlie Loring, Benjamin Micklewright, Westley Hampton Van-Sant, Will Loring, Megan Loring, Haley Kohler, Catherine Makuc) recently visited Roadside Café for a cooking lesson with Fiona DeRis (r). Afterward, they ate their lesson. (Photo by Emma Micklewright)

(*Schools, cont. from p. 1*)
They say that the closures are necessary for the school budget to be level-funded as requested by the select boards of the five district towns (Alford, Egremont, Monterey, New Marlborough, Sheffield). The Monterey Select Board says Monterey did not request level funding. For a school to be closed, four towns must vote at a town meeting to do so. The school committee will decide on February 27 whether or not to request the towns to put the issue on the warrants for the spring annual town meetings. The request will be made if a super majority of the school committee, seven of the ten members, votes to do so.

In preparation for making that decision, the school committee is holding four public hearings: the Monterey hearing was held on February 23 and the Egremont hearing on February 25; the New Marlborough hearing was scheduled for January 30, and the final hearing, in Sheffield, will be held on February 8 at 7 pm at the Consolati Performing Arts Center on the Mt. Everett campus. In the meantime, the school committee will meet with town officials on Thursday, February 2, at 5 pm at Mt. Everett High School High School in Sheffield to present a version of next year's school budget that includes keeping all schools open.

So far the hearings have been contentious. More than eighty parents and other concerned citizens attended the February 23rd hearing at the Monterey Fire House. Superintendent Singleton, who chaired the meeting, was unable, in the opinion of most attendees, to respond satisfactorily or even knowledgably to many of the questions and concerns brought forth—about details of the closure plan and consequences, whether money would actually be saved, long bus rides for small children, increased class sizes, and other issues—and the school committee members remained mostly silent. (For more details on the Monterey and Egremont hearings, see pp. 8, 10.)

The school committee will make their decision on whether or not to send the matter to town meetings on Monday, February 27, at 6 pm at Mt. Everett. The meeting will be open to the public; although comments from the public will likely not be allowed, concerned citizens are encouraged to attend.

— Will Marsh

(*Town, cont. from p. 1*)
to the manner in which the agenda item came to be posted in the first place, which was via email and phone conversations from Town Interdepartmental Secretary Melissa Noe. In his letter Sylbert explains his absence from the meeting, stating that by approving the agenda, the other board members "declared your vote in advance of, and outside of public meeting, and I don't see how I can effectively participate in a meeting in which the majority of my fellow Select Board members have already declared their intentions." (The complete text of Sylbert's letter is available in the 1/9/12 Select Board minutes on the town web site, www.montereyma.gov.)

Chair Wayne Burkhart read Sylbert's letter aloud while members of the Finance Committee and town employees listened; then everyone sat for a few moments to process the complaint leveled at the Select Board. Scott Jenssen stated that he wanted to go on record that the only thing he was asked was by Noe, on the phone, if he was okay with posting an executive session on the agenda for January 9. Burkhart concurred with this and requested that Noe find a copy of the Open Meeting Law for review. Burkhart reviewed the law and stated that collective bargaining with nonunion personnel is a legitimate use of executive session under the Open Meeting Law. However, this begs the point that Sylbert was making, which was not

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if it was a legal use of executive session, but the legal method for arriving at that decision.

Maynard Forbes, Director of Operations, was the first to come to life, stating that he would prefer to postpone the scheduled negotiations for two weeks until Sylbert rejoined the board: "We need to have him back at the table." Finance Committee member Michael Storch noted, "The employees want to go into executive session because they are concerned about the public listening to bickering. Frankly, I thought all their submittals were in order and there really wasn't any bickering." Police Chief Gareth Backhaus stated, "I don't want to see everything fail because of the executive session issue. If we are going to have a successful negotiation then everyone needs to be on board." Storch added that he did not see any reason for using executive session. Backhaus responded, "The original reasoning to go into executive session was because we go into this one idea at a time, debate it, it gets printed [in the *Monterey News*], and then it gets scrapped. It paints a very confusing picture. We thought it would be better to have a more cohesive process."

Interdepartmental Secretary Melissa Noe said that Sylbert has been disagreeing with the way she records the minutes and that he has been editing them: "Jon has been changing my minutes and people will not be able to get a sense of the meetings." Storch countered, "I think the minutes have too much minutia anyway.

Paul Makuc, Connecticut State Trooper and State Fire Marshal Fire Investigator, and his accelerant detection dog, Baxter, recently held a class on fire investigation and arson for the Monterey Fire Department. (Photo by Maynard Forbes)

Furthermore, to go into executive session creates suspicion. This is negotiation with the people who work for our town and it has been very positive so far." Forbes responded, "The reason to do it or not do it should not be based on Jon's [Sylbert's] feelings. The fact is that it can legally be done. All negotiations should not be in the paper." Scott Jenssen concurred, stating, "The final outcome of any negotiations will always be public. If the employees want an executive session then it is their right to request it."

The next meeting of the Select Board, Tuesday, January 17 (Monday was MLK holiday), revealed that Sylbert had submitted a brief letter of resignation to the Town Clerk and, as of January 12, 2012, he was no longer on the board. Select Board chair Wayne Burkhart accepted the letter and made it clear that, regardless of the current disagreement, Sylbert had served the town long and well: "We are happy that we had Jon active and working for the town and we certainly wish him only the best." Select Board member Jenssen noted that Sylbert would be missed, particularly his active participation on the School Committee. Burkhart concurred: "Yes, we really relied on him for School Committee, and he has done a great job for at least ten years." (See letter from Jon Sylbert, p. 24.)

Then the board met with Town Clerk Linda Thorpe to see if a special election should be held to fill the vacancy on the

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Select Board. Thorpe told them about the timeline required for the special election process: "You need to give people a chance to register, and then registration must close twenty days prior to the election. You need to notify the parties so they can schedule a caucus, and that, I think, is at least two weeks. Then nomination papers must be filed." Select Board member Scott Jenssen interrupted: "What is the duration of the term if we do elect someone to the board?" Thorpe said, "They would have to run again in May." Select Board chair Burkhart observed, "This happened recently in Otis, and it took them about four months to have a special election. That brings us right up to Town Meeting, right?" Thorpe agreed, "That's about right." Jenssen said, "I would have no problem with calling a special election, but it's so close to town meeting." Burkhart asked, "How much does a special election cost?" Thorpe replied "About $1500–$2000." Burkhart said, "We need a motion that, having considered all the options and the costs, we are willing to go forward as a two-person board." Jenssen agreed, "I'll make the motion that we will forego a special election due to the laws and the time constraints. It's really in the best interests of the Town." So the Select Board will have only two members until the May election.

In their January 23rd meeting, the two-person Select Board sent a letter to the Attorney General's Office responding to the Open Meeting Law complaint filed by Jonathan Sylbert. The board, as required by the AG's office, reviewed the facts of the complaint and determined that a violation of the OML did not occur; they requested that the AG make the same determination.

School Closures Threatened

Mari Enoch, a representative of the Save Our Schools (SOS) Committee, met with the Select Board on January 30. She explained that a dedicated group of about twenty-five parents from the Southern Berkshire Regional School District (SBRSD) created SOS, and they have been attending the public hearings being held by the school committee to discuss closing the outlying schools in the district.

Apparently at the public hearings the school committee is claiming that the five towns in the district requested that the school budget be level funded this year and is giving this as the reason for closing the schools. Enoch wondered if the Monterey Select Board had made such a request? Burkhart and Jenssen both thought about it for a moment and said, no, they had never made that request. Then Enoch asked who was attending the school committee meetings and representing Monterey now that Jon Sylbert has resigned, and Burkhart replied that he was going to the meetings.

Enoch reviewed the options that the school committee had proposed in the recent past: plan A was they wanted to pass a bond, but that was defeated; now for plan B the school committee proposes closing schools, and they are getting some serious flak for talking about that. Enoch said, "If we don't think of something good for plan C, we will be sitting here again next year having the same discussion." Burkhart said that the Select Board has discussed some other options; one was to lease a building in town, but since that was discussed in an executive session few details are available. Jenssen added that the board had researched using mobile educational trailers as a stopgap measure for a year. Enoch said she would appreciate some leadership from the Select Board on the matter, "because if nothing is done they will just keep asking us to close." Enoch offered support from the SOS committee and said that they would be happy to provide any information the Select Board may need. Jenssen said that one thing SOS could do is to actively promote the Monterey Kindergarten to local parents, and help to increase the number of students at the school. Enoch agreed, saying that SOS members were learning about what the programs at each school have to offer in order to help spread the word. (See related articles on pp. 1, 8, 10.)

Town Employee Compensation

On January 23, the now two-member Select Board met with representatives

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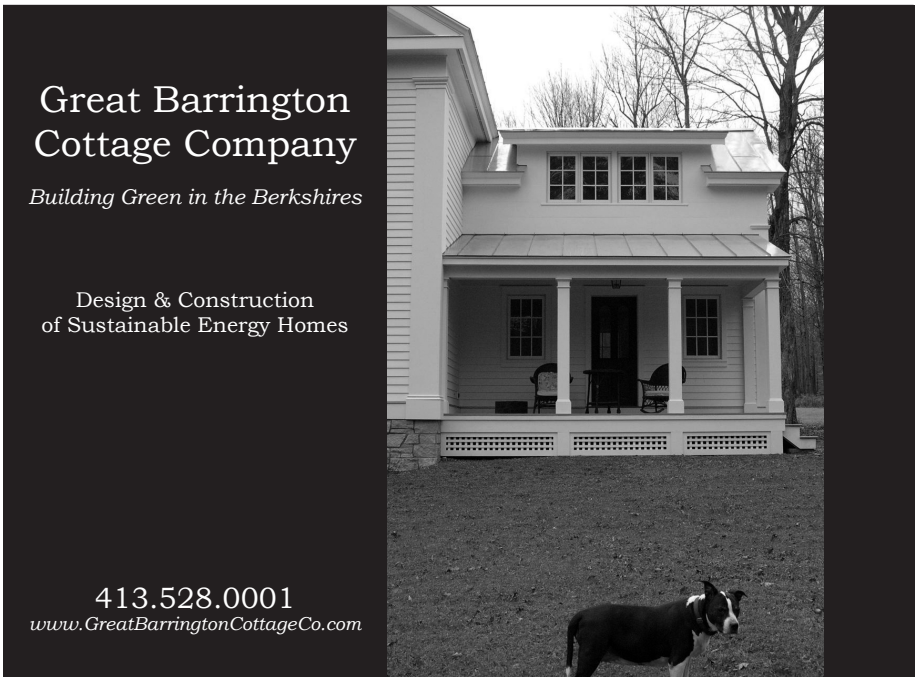

of the town's full-time employees and members of the Finance Committee to continue discussion about salaries and benefit packages for town employees. Director of Operations Maynard Forbes presented the Select Board with an updated benefits proposal that was prepared by all seven town employees and stated that the employees did not feel they needed to go into executive session. The benefits proposal lists items that were on the table for negotiation, in addition to a spreadsheet that showed current benefits, proposed increases, and the potential additional costs. The proposal also listed items that the employees agreed not to pursue, such as dental insurance and sick pay, and the savings to the town that these items represent. Forbes said that the employees think it is a fair proposal and compares well with other towns in Southern Berkshire County.

Select Board chair Wayne Burkhart noted that the employees put a lot of work into the proposal, and the Select Board would also have to perform due diligence in reviewing it. The proposal seeks to add the benefits of a clothing allowance of $400 per year per employee for the Highway Department to help defray the costs of new boots, jackets, and other clothing that gets trashed in the line of duty. The clothing allowance would add $1,600 to the budget. There is a proposal to add $150 per month of on-call pay for Highway Department employees for the winter months of November–March since they must remain in town during the winter, and a similar proposal to add on-call pay to the Police Department of $100 per week, since they also cannot leave their jurisdiction when they are on call. The two on-call pay proposals would add an estimated $8,200 to the town's budget.

Board member Scott Jenssen asked if there was a proposal for salary caps for any position, and said that he had been asked this by at least one citizen who was "concerned about the amount of money that gets paid for positions." Forbes replied that, no, there was no proposal to cap any salaries. Jenssen asked if anyone knew what percentage of the town's budget the salaries represent? Forbes replied, "Probably about 10 percent."

The discussion turned to health insurance, and it was unanimously agreed to stay with the current 90/10 split, with the town responsible for 90 percent of the cost of health insurance and the employees paying the remaining 10 percent.

Forbes forged ahead to discuss contracts, and reported that some towns have three-year contracts and that, in the case of the Highway Departments, it's just part of their budget that gets voted on as a whole and not parsed out into line items. Forbes noted that contracts would provide a sense of work security to town employees. Finance Committee member Stan Ross was cautious about the idea: "It's a contract—who binds who, and to what? When you have a contract you must spell out every detail." Ross also said that the current method of acrimonious discussion on the floor of the town meeting, with people taking potshots at the town employees, was very damaging to morale. Jenssen agreed, stating, "The style we do it brings out a lot of animosity every year. We need to present a good budget and then stand by it. If we can't come up with a good budget, then shame on us." Select Board chair Burkhart agreed that the discussion can get heated at town meeting, but said, "I don't see a way to avoid discussion on the floor of the town meeting, and I'm not sure I would want to. That's how we arrive at what we do."

Burkhart reviewed the schedule for creating the FY 2013 budget with Ross, who said he would take the current benefits proposal back to the Finance Committee for review and then meet with the Select Board on February 6 to make recommendations. Maynard Forbes asked Ross if it would be helpful to have a representative from the town employees available to answer questions, and Ross agreed that was a good plan.

Fire Department Budget

The Select Board met with Fire Chief Shawn Tryon to discuss his meeting with the Finance Committee and the Fire Department's upcoming requests for equipment. Tryon said that he approached the Finance Committee about purchasing a new rescue vehicle: "We are considering moving from a Chevy Suburban-type vehicle (Rescue 5) that is eleven years old, to a light duty rescue with the primary use being medical, to evaluate and treat patients and stabilize them until the ambulance

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arrives. It would also be equipped with the Jaws-of-Life and cold-water rescue gear as well." He gave a rough estimate of the cost as about $200,000. Select Board Chair Burkhart asked how the vehicle fit in with their capital equipment schedule. Tryon replied, "Technically we are behind on that schedule. We did not upgrade as scheduled last year." Finance Committee member Michael Storch said, "We were thinking of using money from the Stabilization Fund to purchase the vehicle instead of taking out a loan." Jenssen and Finance Committee member Dan Moriarty asked if the Fire Department had looked into getting grant money. Moriarty added, "This town is becoming, more and more, a community of senior citizens. If we have a rescue rig with experienced operators, then the response time is reduced. That can make a big difference in a cardiac situation. Plus it provides advanced training for the fire personnel." Burkhart asked about other financing options and Storch replied, "To float a bond." Burkhart asked, "What about putting it on the warrant [for the annual town meeting]? Storch replied, "That would raise taxes and we are not looking to do that."

Tryon continued with his presentation, noting that the 25-year-old airbag for the Jaws-of-Life needs to be replaced, as does the spreader and the ram, and this will cost approximately $25,000; the 1996 fire engine is scheduled to be replaced in 2016 and the 2003 tanker needs to be replaced. He suggested purchasing a new fire engine a little earlier and stretching the 2003 tanker; each of these is $500,000–$600,000. Storch added that the Finance Committee reviewed the maintenance records for both vehicles and feels confident that the maintenance has been good.

Tryon updated the board about a Public Safety Mutual Aid law that the Massachusetts Emergency Management Agency has circulated. The statewide Mutual Aid Agreement is an opt-in format for statewide mutual aid law. Once a community has opted in it can send and/or request assets from any other community in the Commonwealth that has also opted into the agreement. The agreement (Massachusetts General Law Chapter 40 Section 4J) answers question surrounding liability, workers compensation, payment for use of resources, etc. The Select Board opted in and signed the agreement.

Tryon also expressed his opinion that the dam behind the library needs to be repaired and properly maintained: "It's an important water supply and important to help us do our job." The board requested that Tryon put his concerns in writing to help the town to secure funding for a repair project.

WiredWest Broadband Report

Toward the end of the January 9th Select Board meeting Monica Webb met with the board to get their signatures on an important grant proposal she completed for WiredWest. Webb is Monterey's representative to WiredWest, a consortium of towns in Western Massachusetts that is working on funding to bring fiber optic communications cable to residences and businesses in the hill towns to help make them more economically viable. Webb explained that the Community Innovation Challenge Grant is a program to improve municipal services and reduce costs, and specifically requests that projects be ready to be brought to fruition if awarded the grant. Webb also informed the board that WiredWest is using the Berkshire Regional Planning Commission as the administrative and fiscal agent for the proposal. Webb has been instrumental in organizing the small towns of Western Massachusetts to be part of a municipal lighting company (MLC), a vehicle for the group to create financing to fund the project. This involved getting each town to vote twice in favor of becoming part of the MLC. Webb stated, "Because our grant will represent forty municipalities, and will help with all aspects of the community, it will be a very strong contender." The Select Board signed the grant application.

Town Flag

The Select Board also consulted with the Town Clerk about the Monterey town flag contest. The winning design features

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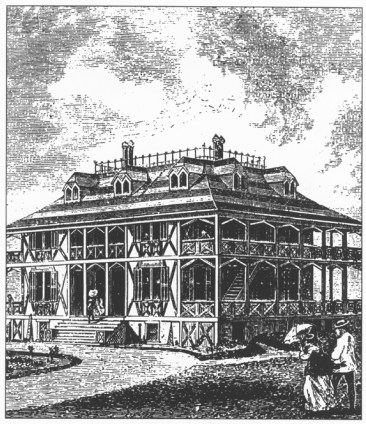

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the town seal on a blue background. There were questions about copyright infringement since the seal was designed by Edith Wilson, who is deceased. Interdepartmental Secretary Melissa Noe reported that, as far as she knew, the person who submitted the design (and is remaining anonymous) has no ambition to get credit for the flag design; he or she simply thought it would make the best flag for the town. Town Clerk Linda Thorpe provided some background about Wilson's design, explaining that it was voted on and accepted at a town meeting in 1972 when it was formally adopted as the seal of the town. Thorpe said Wilson's original design was a black and white drawing. When the Fire Company bought a new fire truck in 1976 they wanted to put the town seal on the door, but they wanted it in color. Thorpe said that Wilson was "furious" and did not want the seal rendered in color, but since she did not have a copyright on the seal she had no recourse. Today the town seal, in color, decorates everything from the fire trucks to the town letterhead.

Select Board Meeting Time

The Select Board discussed changing the time of the Select Board meetings to earlier on Mondays. Jenssen said he favored the schedule that was used when he first joined the board; meeting at 8:30 a.m. Burkhart noted that when the meetings are earlier in the day it's much easier to meet with town employees because it's during their workday. Town Interdepartmental Secretary Melissa Noe said that she favors the morning meeting time because then she can be there in person and does not have to rely solely on the digital recording for information. Noe explained that she must come in early on Mondays because she is the secretary to the Inspector of Buildings, and his hours are Monday morning, and she is not willing to stay until late in the evening. Burkhart turned to Maggie Leonard (this reporter) to ask how that schedule would work for her. Leonard replied that it would make it difficult for her to attend but she would do her best. Burkhart said that was duly noted, and also reiterated that the early meeting time allowed the board greater interaction with the employees who do the actual work of the town, and this weighed heavily in favor of the change. It was unanimously agreed to change the Select Board meeting time to 9 am Monday mornings.

Police Report

Police Chief Gareth Backhaus reported on police activity from December 19 through January 22, which included:

- Motor vehicle lockout, Main Rd.
- Building checks, Main Rd., Hupi Rd., Beartown Mtn Rd.
- Assisted citizen on Main Rd.
- Abuse complaint, Northeast Cove.
- Lost dog found on Mt Hunger Rd.; surrounding area was canvassed and no one claimed ownership. Dog was listed on WSBS and taken to Marge Gulick's.
- Assisted citizen with paperwork.
- Lost dog found on Swann Rd.; returned to owners.
- Harassment complaint on Blue Hill; nothing found to substantiate claim.
- Assisted citizen on Beartown Mtn. Rd; pipe burst, water running into street.
- Loose horse on Main Rd.; provided traffic control.
- Unfounded complaints on Blue Hill Rd,; crisis team called in.
- Assisted with traffic for brush fire on Rte. 57 caused by someone dumping hot pot of fireplace ash on ground.
- Courtesy transfer to Laurel Hill Rd.
- Dispute on Main Rd. over dog droppings—peace restored
- Assisted lost citizen.
- Motor vehicle accidents: Sandisfield Rd. (car towed), Main Rd.
- Disabled MV on Main Rd.
- False Alarms: Hupi Woods Cir., Sylvan Rd. (2x), Art School Rd.
- Abandoned 911 calls: Hebert's Cove, Northeast Cove, Main Rd.

Gould Farm 100th Anniversary

BJ Johnson met with the Select Board to inform them that in 2013 Gould Farm will celebrate its 100th anniversary. The committee at Gould Farm is in the planning stages, and Johnson wanted to know whom they should contact regarding events—for instance if they wanted to have a 5k road race? Burkhart said that the Cultural Council is typically in charge of events in Monterey, but if anything is planned for a park or for Lake Garfield then the Park Commission should be contacted.

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Save Our Village Schools

Parents of children in the Southern Berkshire Regional School District (SBRSD) are currently engaged in an intense and emotionally charged debate with school committee members. It is no surprise that the topic of closing the district's three satellite schools, Monterey, South Egremont, and New Marlborough Central, has once again reared its ugly head.

Superintendent Michael Singleton stated he was asked by members of the Select Boards of the five towns comprising the district (Alford, Egremont, New Marlborough, Sheffield, and Monterey) to present a budget proposal this year that was "level funded." Meaning, said Singleton, that it would not be any higher than the current fiscal plan'.

Singleton believes that the only way in which to comply with this objective and find approximately $340,000 in reductions in his $13.8 million budget is by closing the village schools. Many parents are incredulous at this proposal and question these short-term savings. If this money is saved this fiscal year through the closures, what will have to be trimmed next time? Many are concerned by what they see as a knee-jerk reaction that lacks any vision and appreciation of what these schools bring to their respective communities.

In line with his proposal, Singleton released a 21-point document giving his reasons for consolidating the schools. These ranged from lack of library facilities, lack of exposure to arts and music, no cafeterias, and no after-school program opportunities. For parents with children in the schools, this was a laughable and unsupported document, essentially lacking in anything substantial.

A public-awareness campaign has been organized by concerned parents who have come together to form the SOS (Save Our Schools) Committee. The SOS strategy is to highlight the educational value of the small school and debunk the idea of consolidation. They believe that local schools are part of the community fabric and provide unique educational advantages to students.

In a letter to the *Berkshire Eagle*, SOS member Jennifer Sahn, who has a child in first grade at the South Egremont school cites a study undertaken by the Donahue Institute at the University of Massachusetts released in 2007. It found, "With regard to student achievement and most other outcomes on educational quality, research supports small schools." Additionally, she quotes an article in the *New York Times* which states, "Small schools are increasingly seen as crucial to students' success in the early grades."

Many parents are concerned that closing the schools will have a ripple effect across the communities. It is thought that the towns would not be as attractive to potential residents without the schools, and local businesses that rely on the traffic of these schools will suffer.

The schools are the heart of the towns, with both Monterey and South Egremont enjoying a symbiotic relationship with local businesses supplying their lunches. Gould Farm supplies the lunches for Monterey School, and South Egremont students enjoy lunches provided by the Village Country Store. The Monterey and New Marlborough schools have close ties with their local libraries where children have their own library cards and are fluent in how to use its resources.

The ball has been set rolling with four public hearings, and eventually the school committee vote on February 27. Monterey had its hearing on Jan 23, which was well attended. The Superintendent was peppered with questions about the proposal, and many members of the public asked for more information from the committee to explain how this administration had come to its conclusion.

Egremont hosted the second of the hearings on Jan 26, which again was well attended. Tensions rose as parents grew increasingly frustrated with what they saw as a lack of information available to them on how these conclusions were being

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drawn. Superintendent Singleton and the school committee members fielded numerous questions and comments specific to the budget and also heard emotional pleas for committee members to think outside the box and to form a bridge to work together with the public to save the schools.

The third public hearing was scheduled in the New Marlborough Town Hall on January 30. Sheffield will host the final hearing on Wednesday, February 8, at 7 pm at the Thomas A. Consolati Performing Arts Center.

If the proposal gets a super majority with seven of the ten school committee members deciding to move forward, then the vote moves to the general public to ultimately decide in town meetings. Singleton believes that this will ensure a democratic process by allowing the general public to have their say.

Parents, however, are alarmed by the speed at which this is occurring, with many left wondering how they can get enough information out to the general public to allow for a fair and informed vote. The concern is if it goes to the town meetings many voters will assume that by closing the schools they will save on their taxes. This notion has been challenged in the hearings, and it has been purported that the district's towns will need tax increases to improve the main campus in Sheffield should the village schools close.

In the event of the school closures, bussing children to the main campus in Sheffield could see travel times of over an hour each way. As a result it is expected that many students, as high as 75 percent will undoubtedly choice out of SBRSD if the schools close. This could potentially cost in excess of $375,000 in additional expenses payable to other school districts, based on the district paying $5,000 per child.

On a recent Thursday I enjoyed a local school field trip with my son, Benjamin, who is in K at the Monterey School. We visited The Roadside Café to make soup. I live three minutes from the school so was able to pop my baby in her car seat and head down to help drive some of the kids the short distance to the cafe.

The children had such a great time, warmly welcomed by Fiona DeRis and staff. Monterey residents who came in for coffee were delighted at seeing the children at work. Jon Tranfaglia, in charge of SBRSD catering, arrived to touch base with Fiona. Kenn Basler dropped in too; he was responsible for providing the lunches before the Roadside, and the children were excited to see him again. It was a lovely scene.

The children chopped vegetables into a huge pot, unaware that this simple, uncomplicated school experience was potentially dangling by a thread. It led me to thinking that if all parents, committee members, and teachers worked together to throw an important ingredient into the pot, then maybe we could come up with a solution to nourish and satisfy us all.

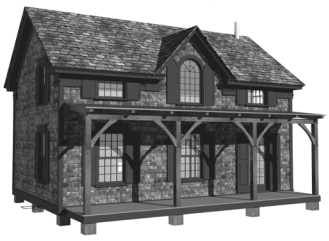
— Emma Micklewright, Monterey
www.sosschools.com
Friends of the Little Schools, Facebook

Community Potluck Feb. 15

At the January Potluck MaryPaul Yates was unable to do her presentation due to unforeseen circumstances. But we did have a speaker and a very lively and timely presentation and discussion, thanks to Mark and Mary Makuc. They arranged to have Charlie Flynn, Selectman and School Board member from Egremont, speak about what can and should be done to keep our school open. And Lynn Webster, our Monterey School teacher, spoke about what happens in an average day at the school. Many thanks to them both for stepping in at short notice. We hope that MaryPaul will be able to speak at a future Potluck.

At this time, we do not have a definite speaker for the February Potluck. We do have irons in the fire, however, and any suggestions would be welcomed. Please call Barbara Dahlman at 528-8287 or Kyle Pierce at 442-8258. We are still planning the next Monterey Community Potluck for February 15 at 6 pm in the Fellowship Hall of the Monterey Meetinghouse. Please bring a dish to share with a serving utensil, and a place setting and silverware for yourself. Everyone is welcome.

— Barbara Dahlman & Kyle Pierce



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Reflections on School Hearings

After the first two of the four public hearings being held by the Southern Berkshire Regional School District it is clear that neither the superintendent nor the school committee are prepared to address the public's concerns. Dr. Singleton, the superintendent, began the hearings by requesting questions from the audience. Unfortunately his answers were too often "I don't know," "I don't have that information," or "We're working on that." Fortunately the audiences in both the Monterey and Egremont meetings were vociferous in their comments supporting the rural schools.

On Monday night, January 23, in Monterey, Mr. Sears of the school committee told us that when the regional district was formed it was assumed that the rural schools would soon be disbanded and all of the children would attend one central school in Sheffield. It is interesting that this has not happened over the last fifty years; I think that is because it has never been in the best interest of all of our children and it remains not in the best interest of all of our children.

Our townships have different demographics, personalities, and citizenry. I think that all five towns in our regional district should work to preserve this diversity and not make decisions that will have negative consequences in three of our rural towns.

Using Monterey as an example, our children begin their school experience learning that they are Montereyans: when they look around and see other children who live in Monterey, they start to develop a sense of belonging to a community. Their parents meet dropping off their children and chat with each other while waiting to pick them up in the afternoon. Parental friendships are made, play dates are arranged, and the sense of community for the entire family is reinforced. I am certain this scenario exists at all three of our rural schools. It helps to strengthen all of our townships, and it is priceless.

The superintendent cites the fact that our Kindergarten does not have a gymnasium, a cafeteria, or a library. This is true. Our Monterey children do not have a gymnasium, but they do go to ice skate at our town rink, go on walks about the town, and climb the hill in the yard over and over again. Our children go to the public library right across the street rather than to just a room down the hallway filled with books. Visiting the public library is the beginning of establishing a very healthy habit. Our children are fed a lunch provided by Gould Farm. It is most likely the healthiest of any lunch for any student in all of Berkshire County.

We in Monterey have paid an inordinate share of the capital budget of this school district for the Mt. Everett and Undermountain construction costs, while at the same time watching the school committee ignore our physical plant. It is not the time to say that, yes, in fact too little maintenance was provided but that it is now too late, as the shrug of the superintendent's shoulders suggested on Monday night in Monterey.

The superintendent wrote down 21 reasons to close our rural schools. He did not write down 21 reasons to keep them open, seemingly revealing his predisposition to close them. The attempt to level fund the budget by closing three schools may make some Finance Committees happy and some select board members look good. But the school committee was not elected to make them happy or look good, but to be staunch advocates for our children's education.

It is now the time for the school committee to step up to the plate and offer a budget that respects our small town schools and begins the process of caring for them properly. This includes going to each of their annual town meetings and selling the budget, explaining the value of our rural towns and their diversity to their citizenry: explaining that the pre-K, kindergarten, and primary grades of our rural schools are the most sensitive years of a child's education and should be wholeheartedly supported in their own communities. Their job description should include being a proponent for the best possibilities for all of our children, not just the cheapest.

Closing the rural schools will not only deny our children a very unique learning experience, it will also be injurious to the very fabric of our communities. Let us celebrate and preserve the distinct personalities and differences of all our five towns. I ask that the school committee allow our rural schools to be strengthened and our sense of community to flourish.

— Muriel Lazzarini

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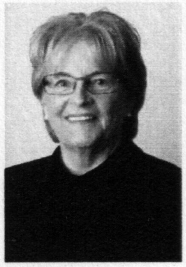
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Monterey Town Nurse Proposal: Part II

The role of the Town Nurse would be to work closely with the Monterey resident and her or his primary physician and/or specialist, coordinating the effectiveness, and efficiency of care, on an as-needed and or ongoing basis. Nursing visits would be done during set clinic/office hours, and/or home visits. Who would be eligible? Any fulltime or part-time Monterey resident. Does the person need to be homebound? No.

The Town Nurse Proposal is for a nurse twenty hours per week. The hours would be a set schedule, split up into four days, spread out across the week, for example, Tuesday, Wednesday, Friday, Saturday. In order to accommodate Monterey residents' schedules, one day would be designated to have late afternoon to early evening hours and another day designated for Saturday hours. The frequency of nursing visits to a resident would be determined after a nursing health assessment was completed; nursing visits could be two to three times a week, weekly, biweekly, monthly, bimonthly, every six months, etc. Visits would be based on the resident's needs. Daily visits would be possible for short-term cases: for example, to administer eye drops after cataract surgery to a resident who is unable and has no one available to help.

Nursing health assessments and education would be tailored to the residents' health needs. For example, if a person has heart and/or lung disease, the nurse would perform an assessment of the cardiac and respiratory system; if the person has diabetes, the nurse would perform an assessment targeting this disease, and so forth. For every medical diagnosis, there would be an individually tailored nursing assessment, care, and education plan. I think it is important for people to understand the depth of care that is provided by a nurse; however, to cover even the six most common chronic conditions (high blood pressure, heart disease, high cholesterol, cancer, diabetes, and arthritis) would require much more space to describe than is available in the *Monterey News*. Instead, over the next several months each *News* article will cover a specific nursing assessment.

Let's take a deeper look at the nursing assessment process for a person who, for example, has heart and/or lung problems. The nurse would monitor vital signs, which include temperature, pulse, respirations, and blood pressure, as well as oxygen saturation rate. The nurse would listen to the person's heart sounds along with the cardiac cycle for irregularities or changes; observe for fluid retention in face, hands, abdomen, lower legs, and feet; and monitor weight. The lungs would be assessed by use of a stethoscope to listen for irregularities or changes, rhythm, quality, degree of effort required to breath, skin color, mental status (any confusion), cough, and the amount and color of mucous. The nurse would look at every prescription and over-the-counter medication and supplement, coordinating with the individuals' physician to reconcile any differences in patient and physician medication list, as well as educate on the use, dosage, frequency, and possible side effects. The nurse would pre-fill medication boxes if needed. The nurse would obtain any labs ordered by the physician, such as drawing blood, and transport this to the lab. The nurse would assess the individuals' ability to care for themselves, such as how much effort does it take to bathe, dress, and prepare a meal. Do they need assistance with these tasks? Do they need help with housekeeping, shopping, rides to MD visits, etc.? The nurse would work with the individual and, with permission, their family, significant others, and caretakers to educate on how to make the person as independent as possible, as well as assist with referrals to appropriate and available resources such as Elderservices of Berkshire County, for services like homemaking, shopping, "Meals on Wheels," etc. The nurse documents findings, the care and education provided, and coordinates with the physician as needed.

Who are appropriate patients for this type of office or home visit? Any whose doctor has said they have a heart or lung disease/problem; anyone taking multiple cardiac or respiratory medications; anyone on oxygen; anyone who has recently been discharged from the hospital, has had a recent visit to the Emergency Room, recently been discharged from Visiting Nurse Care; anyone concerned and having questions about their cardiac and respiratory health; anyone interested in prevention screening and education. Once the initial assessment is complete, the nurse along with the person designs a plan. Perhaps this plan would be just a one-time visit, or it might be weekly, monthly, every three to six months, and so forth. The frequency of assessments is based on the state of health for that individual at the time of the nursing assessment, and changes according to need.

When is a nursing assessment not appropriate? When the individual needs emergent care, such as for chest pain. In this case, the person, family, etc., should activate 911 services. The Town Nurse will work closely with the Fire and Police Departments, but is not a replacement for Monterey's Emergency Medical Services.

— Kathie Tryon, Main Road, Monterey.
KathieTryon@yahoo.com

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Monterey Republican Town Committee News

The Republican Town Committee has been meeting to come up with nominations for the local elections to be held in May. There is a vacant seat for the Select Board as well as various other seats on virtually all of our boards that will be up for election. If you are interested in doing your civic duty and serving our town, please get in touch with Fran Amidon, 528-1233, or Mark Makuc, 528-1382. We will be glad to help you get involved in our town, which is in need of people like you to help run our community. We will be having a meeting at 4 pm on Tuesday, February 14, to go over the seats up for election. On Saturday, March 3, we will meet again and caucus at 1:30 pm in the church basement with the purpose of nominating a slate for the town election. Please consider becoming involved!

Democratic Caucus Feb. 11

Democrats in Monterey will hold a caucus to elect delegates to the Massachusetts Democratic Party's 2012 nominating convention on Saturday, February11, at 11:00 am, in the Meetinghouse basement. All registered Democrats in Monterey are eligible to participate. Delegates to the 2012 Massachusetts Democratic Party nominating convention will select candidates to compete for the Democratic nomination for the U.S. Senate. One delegate and one alternate will be elected at the caucus. The convention will be held on Saturday, June 2, 2012, at the Mass Mutual Center in Springfield.

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Phone 528-3795

Maynard Forbes

Town Duck Committee meeting by the Konkapot, behind the Post Office (where they go to get their—oh, you know—duck stamps).

Town Offices on May 2012 Town Election

The following town offices are to be voted on in the May town election. Current incumbents are shown, although all of them may not run again. Now is the time for anyone interested in running for one of these positions to come forward. Call the Town Democratic Committee (Lisa Smyle, 528-8832) or Town Republican Committee (Fran Amidon, 528-1233, or Mark Makuc, 528-1382) to indicate your willingness to serve the town.

Board of Appeals, 5 years
(Robert Lazzarini, inc.)
Board of Assessors, 3 years
(Jacob Krans, inc.)
Board of Health, 3 years
(Stephen Enoch, inc.)
Cemetery Commission, 3 years
(Linda Thorpe, inc.)
Finance Committee, 3 years
(Daniel Moriarty, inc.)
Library Trustee, 3 years
(Denise Andrus, inc.)
Library Trustee, 3 years
(Lois Storch, inc.)
Moderator, 1 year
(Mark Makuc, inc.)
Park Commission, 3 years
(Joshua Allentuck, inc.)
Park Commission, 3 years
(Emily Johnson, inc.)
Park Commission, 1 year
(currently vacant)
Planning Board, 5 years
(Maggie Leonard, inc.)
Planning Board, 5 years
(Barry Karson, inc.)
Planning Board, 2 years
(currently vacant)
Select Board, 3 years
(Wayne Burkhart, inc.)
Select Board, 2 years
(currently vacant)
Town Clerk, 3 years
(Linda Thorpe, inc.)
Tree Warden, 1 year
(Shaylan Burkhart, inc.)

Berkshire Pulse Residency at New Marlborough Central

Berkshire Pulse of Housatonic will offer a month-long in-school program in February for third and fourth graders at the New Marlborough Central School in Mill River, celebrating African Culture during Black History Month. "Cultural Traditions" will bring African culture to life through art, music, dance, and storytelling.

Every year in classrooms around the nation students acknowledge Black History Month by celebrating the achievements and contributions of African Americans. "Often missing though," says Bettina Montano, Founder and Artistic Director of Berkshire Pulse, "is what is at the heart of the African Culture: the language of music and dance." Made possible by a grant from The Berkshire Bank Foundation, the residency program will focus on an exploration of African Culture through an array of arts in many curriculum areas. Music, dance, and visual arts, which are intrinsically linked to the stories that were born in Africa and passed down orally from generation to generation, will be used to retrace history, following the path that brought this culture to our country.

Working closely with Tom Masters, a faculty member at Berkshire Pulse and fourth grade teacher at New Marlboro Central School, Berkshire Pulse formed a team of musicians, dancers, and educators to develop a program that would weave these experiences into the classroom. This program will be offered to Masters' class of third and fourth graders, and will focus on a story from Mali, *The Hatseller And The Monkeys*, by Baba Wagué Diakite. The book centers around Koredjouka, an important part of society in Mali. Koredjouka are tricksters, herbalists, and healers, who promote community and encourage people to join together.

The residency will culminate in a school-wide presentation, giving students the opportunity to integrate their experiences, and share these experiences with the school community. "This is an exciting opportunity for students in this school district, to honor a culture that has impacted our country for hundreds of years," says Berkshire Pulse Faculty, and In-School Program Coordinator, Kim Waterman, "there are so many opportunities in our children's curriculum for these kinds of experiences. Collaborations such as these, between school and arts educators, will help us to continue to provide them in the future."

Founded in 2004 by dance educator and choreographer Bettina Montano and known for its multidisciplinary dance programs, Berkshire Pulse is a not-for-profit organization dedicated to building and strengthening community life through diverse and accessible programming in performing, movement and creative arts. They offer year-round instruction for youth ages 4–18 in ballet, modern, jazz, hip-hop, tap, African dance, flamenco, and world music, and weekly classes and workshops for teens, and adults 18–87, including flamenco, bellydance, zumba, swing, Afro-Caribbean, ballet, modern, jazz, tap, hip hop, Scottish country dance, Latin dance, tai chi, yoga, Feldenkrais, and more.

For information contact D. Curto at 413-274-6624, email berkshire.pulse@gmail.com or visit www.berkshirepulse.org.

Gould Farm Art at Knox Gallery

The Monterey Library and Gould Farm warmly invite you to share in viewing *Cropped*, an art exhibit to be displayed at the Monterey Library's Knox Gallery.

Gould Farm is a local residential therapeutic community dedicated to aiding adults with mental illlness in their recovery. Contributing artists will be community members from all areas of the farm, whose wide variety of artwork ranges from watercolor to photography, and beyond. Through displaying this work, Gould Farm community members are able not only to highlight the depth of their individual talents beyond their roles on the farm, but also to connect more meaningfully to the greater Monterey community.

Gould Farm is delighted to be in close collaboration with the Monterey Library and the Friends of the Library for this exhibit, and encourages the public to attend the opening reception on Saturday, February 4, from 7-9 pm. Thenceforth, the show will be open for viewing during regular library hours until March 5.

— Rachel Mossey

Town Skating Party Feb. 20

The Monterey Park Commission will host the annual Skating Party on Monday, February 20 (Presidents' Day), from 1–3 pm in the firehouse pavilion. Games, food, and drink will be available. All welcome.

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Aerial Show

The grassy field twinkles with early morning dew
And shudders with the movement of a thousand geese
Their bodies a black undulating garment covering the airport grounds.

We drive by slowly
Wondering what the geese are doing there.
In the near distance, single engine planes hulk
Waiting for someone to take them into the sky.

There is a pickup truck
Parked by the side of the field.
The cab door opens and out bounds a large dog
Causing uproar in the grass.

Our eyes open wider as
A thousand black geese take to the air.
The dog barking furiously, confusedly –
Hoping for a little fun
But instead having to settle
For an aerial show.

— A. Hardt

Skiing

Glittery
Sparkley
Dazzling sight
Down the slope of scarlet light
Brushing Sweeping
all snow is weeping
when you're skiing down.

— Charlotte Micklewright

Skiing 2

Skiing down the
mountain at the
speed of light.
Some go into
a big flight.
When you're
up and
you're flying
you feel
like you're
skydiving.

— Charlotte Micklewright
(Age 7, 2nd Grade,
New Marlborough Central School)

Winter Tableau

Against the hillside snow is softly banked,
while through bare trees glint rays of midday sun.
Way back into the opened woods I see
up there from where our little brook has come.
Beside the house a tired birch extends
as, close by, frozen pine cones sleep.
Sorely bent by last year's storms, small trees arch
across the tiny field, out from the slope
where deer, in summertime, descend to graze.
(Could they have made these tracks set in the snow?)
Nearby, through high-up branches, grey squirrels leap;
across the way, there sits a stately crow.
Though the freezing cold may have you frazzled
look around: you might be dazzled!

— Ed Schur

Life in the Caribbean

Try it: Float on your back in just the right spot
With your eyes closed and
Your ears muffled by turquoise waters.
If the sun breaks through the clouds
It may warm your face for a brief while.
You can imagine you are on vacation in the Caribbean,
Not at Berkshire South during open family swim.

— A. Hardt

Three Fates

One more beautiful than the sun
looks back upon dalliance and daisies
ribbons in the water
and a sky cradle
billowing veils
of bliss.

One busier than the moon
bent over
a loom of fretted dreams
and dark tangled hopes
shredded hoops
thistling over the dusty
abyss.

One with my own somehow face
turned away
to meet that gay old stranger
wrinkle-walking
perhaps wiser
coming down death steps
with a kiss.

— A. O. Howell

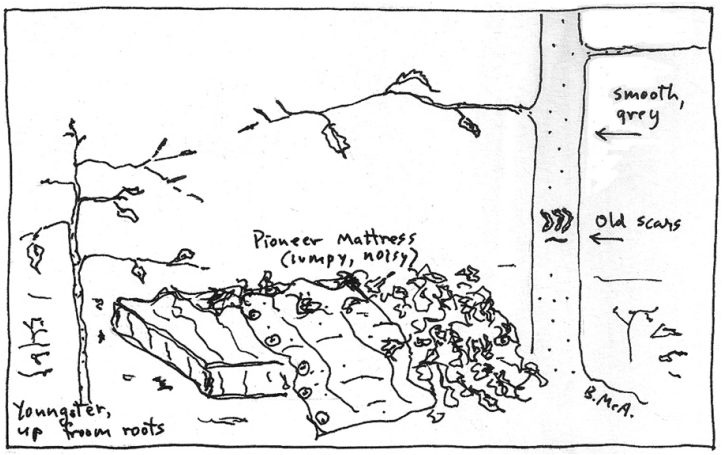
Winter Trip to the Beeches

Winter trips can be rewarding, but too often ice and snow make them dangerous or even cause us to reconsider, cancel, or postpone. This is almost never the case here on Hupi Road when we plan a trip to the beeches. In fact, the trip requires mighty little planning since the beeches are right up the hill and we can get to them in any weather. Step outside, duck back for a heavier jacket or grippier boots, then head out.

One recent morning we had a socked-in kind of dawn, with steely brightness expanding every second but no sparkling lightshow over Chestnut Hill. When we got to the beeches, a thick young stand on the north side of our upper pasture, we crawled in and sat down to wait.

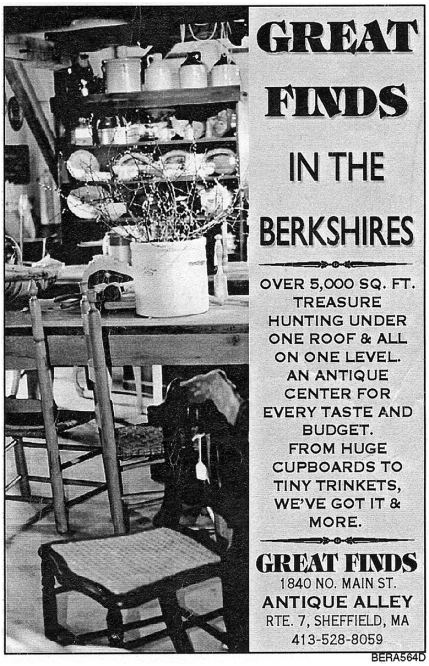
Lately we have been catching the fabulous Thick Young Beech Grove performance every morning, with first-class seats. I am there, and so is the dog. We are quiet but the beeches are not. These American Beeches, *Fagus grandifolia*, have a busy rhythm section that never quits. Last year's leaves, pale and inspired, are hanging on tight and rattling, even when it seems there is no wind. Some mornings there is rain, sometimes teeny bits of ice, and these, added to the percussion of leaf upon leaf or leaf upon twig, make a real racket. This is a racket that catches the elements and gives them to us in spades. Sometimes I like to lie down and keep listening, while looking up at all that action against the brightening sky. These fully reclined seats on the ground, they are the best.

Our little beeches have popped up since the goats left the pasture, which is some years back when everyone quit drinking milk around here. There are plenty of mature beech trees in these woods, including that north edge of the pasture, but we hardly ever see any fertile beechnuts. Some years there are the little three-part burrs on the ground, but after a lifetime of eagerly opening them and then pestering them with my teeth, I have just about never eaten a beechnut. What I've found inside the burrs is an empty shell of an undeveloped seed, the ovum unpollinated or at least undeveloped. Sometimes I've wondered if these are just the ones left by discerning squirrels and turkeys, which make off with all the good nuts while I am looking the other way. I doubt it. There are many fine adult beeches of reproductive age in these parts. My book says they put out "abundant nuts" at two-to-eight-year intervals. This should have happened eight times or more in my long life and I would have noticed it at least once, I am sure.



Like a lot of plants and some animals, beeches can reproduce asexually. Who needs nuts? They send up suckers from stumps and roots and the little clones do fine in sun or shade. I'm not sure why shallow roots under a mature tree in our upper pasture chose now for putting up babes. It could be they were doing it all during our dairy-goat years and the little beechlings developed into goats and milk and members of our family instead of the full-blown rhythm section of a dawn band.

Now they are on their way, maybe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to eighty feet up in the sky. Beeches can live three to four hundred years, says my book, and get to be three feet across at "breast height." There is one in Maryland, heralded as the National Champion Beech, which is 115 feet tall. In Michigan, a state perhaps less interested in fame and the title, there is a 161-foot beech, with a trunk 4½ feet across.

You can tell a beech in the Monterey woods by its pale grey bark. This is one of the few deciduous trees that starts out smooth barked in its youth and then stays that way. Any scar on the bark shows up, including those put there by folks with jackknives. Years ago I noticed odd markings on certain beeches around here, like sideways sergeants' stripes from a uniform, or parallel 7's. Sometimes these would be underlined. Thanks to an elderly reader who phoned me, I found out these were the marks of crews of sprayers, working back in the days of the CCC, spraying for gypsy moths. On a given work day they would cover a certain area of the woods and record their passage with their particular mark: this section, done. This was DDT territory back then.

The American beech once grew all over the continent, wherever there was enough water in the ground and winters weren't too long and hard. Now we find it only in the eastern states and it is the only species of the genus *Fagus* in these parts. The leaves (*grandifolia*) stay on the tree a long time in the winter and when they do fall, they don't decompose as easily as some. They join the oak leaves to make a tough top layer on the carpet on the floor of the woods. I think of it as a good roof for all the action underneath, the microorganisms and insects hunkering under, especially in winter. These sturdy beech leaves were used by pioneers for stuffing mattresses, says the history book. Our own rattling young trees tell me these might have been noisy mattresses at first.

Look now for the pale trees, the long slim leaf buds, and then flowers in late April and early May. If you find some good nuts in the fall, I hope you'll call me. Meanwhile, with such easy winter beech trips and perfect seats for every show, I'll never complain.

— Bonner J. McAllester

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WiredWest Update:

As 2012 begins, WiredWest is continuing to work diligently to bring twenty-first-century broadband to the doorsteps of our community residents and businesses.

Highlights of our 2011 activities include:

- The WiredWest Communications Cooperative Corporation was established in August and currently has twenty-four Western Massachusetts member towns (including Monterey) that have passed the Municipal Light Plant legislation. Eighteen additional towns are in the process of voting and/or joining. Voting requires each town to conduct votes at two town meetings that must pass with two-thirds majorities. So far, most towns have passed it unanimously or close to it.
- Bylaws and policy guidelines for the Cooperative were drafted and adopted.
- WiredWest Articles of Incorporation were approved by the Massachusetts Secretary of State.
- The following groups within the WiredWest Cooperative were established to complete tasks and provide guidance to the project: Executive Committee, Board of Directors, working committees, Advisory Council.
- A working pro-forma was developmed. This thirty-page document is a set of projected financial statements in a dynamic format that enables easy modification of inputs.
- Developed budget for FY 2012.
- A $50,000 grant was awarded from the Massachusetts Broadband Institute (MBI) to be used toward a market study, engineering survey, mapping, and procurement support.
- A $2,500 grant was received from the Central Berkshire Fund.
- Pledges of $105,000 of matching funds and in-kind services to support the project were received.
- Donations of $9,000 in direct donations and underwriting were received.
- A procurement plan for key vendors and services was developed, as required under Massachusetts 30B, the Uniform Procurement Act.

Our ongoing work is focused on finalizing our business plan and its underlying assumptions, and completing tasks for the MBI grant.

Plans for 2012

This coming year will be another busy one, focused initially on finishing the business plan and procuring partners for our financing team and operation of the network. So far in January, we have issued an RFI for engineering services and completed an application for the state's new Community Innovation Challenge grant program, to request funding for financing costs. We expect to have the business plan and engineering survey completed by April 30, 2012, and will keep you posted on key developments, especially progress on financing and buildout plans.

— Monica Webb

Monica Webb is Monterey's representative to WiredWest.

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The Cow Barn: Icon Of An Epoch

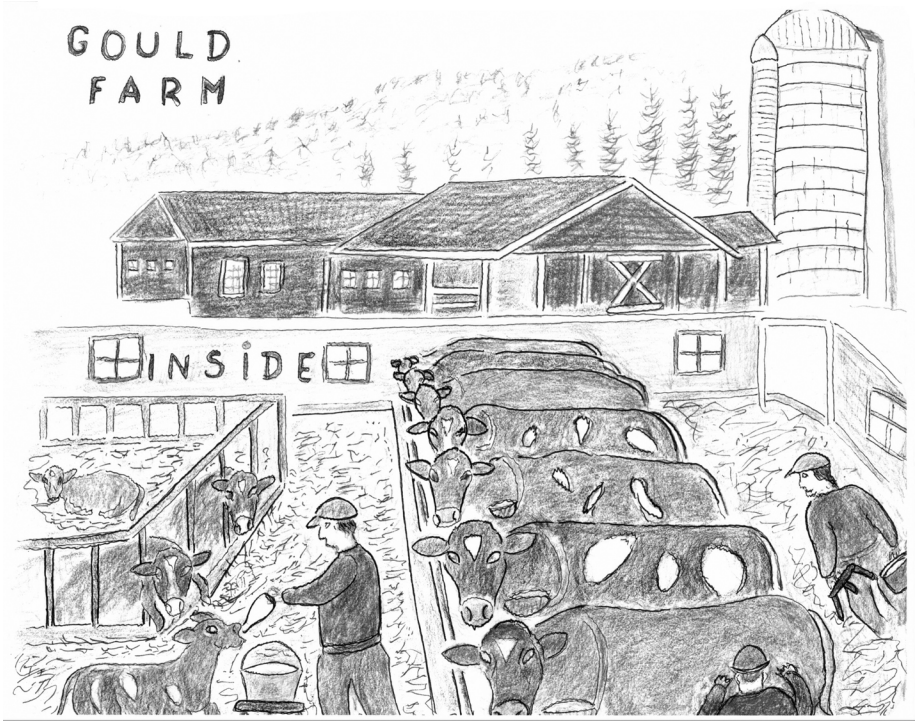
The cow barn is a specialized structure specifically designed to house a dairy herd and often referred to by old timers here as "a milking parlor." Each cow had her own stanchion, which was equipped with a drinking bowl that was activated by depressing her muzzle as well as a feeding trough in front that ran the full length of the barn.

The feeding trough in front of the cows was separated off from the walkway there and kept meticulously clean. In the rear, another deeper trough collected the cow's manure, which was picked up regularly and stored outside to be spread later across the winter fields to add nutrients to the soil.

Cows coming into the barn walked through a footbath, and their udders were cleaned with antiseptic before the suction cups of the milking machine were attached. For a large herd, as many as twelve cups could be applied at one time by several workers to keep the process moving along, twice a day.

According to Dick Tryon, former dairy farmer and president of the Massachusetts Farm Bureau, some fifty years ago in Monterey there were a good number of operating cow barns until the government milk subsidy acted as a buyout, encouraging farmers to go out of business. Some of them still to be seen are:

Lowland Farm
Thompson Farm



George Brett Farm
Woodland Farm
Blue Hill Farm
William Brett Farm
Brookmead Farm
Heath Farm
Gould Farm

If you are interested in the architecture of these agricultural landmarks, the Monterey Library has a relevant book, *Barns of Berkshire County*, which includes those in Monterey and others nearby such as High Lawn Farm, owned and operated by the same family for more than one hundred years, as well as the famous round stone barn in Hancock Shaker Village.

As the winter brings more snow, some barns were attached to farmhouses; these were called Vermont or Maine barns. Others such as the Delmolino side-entrance pole barn in Sheffield, the gambrel-roof barn on Blue Hill Road in Monterey, and the Sunset Hill barn with its decorative cupola in Tyringham are typical of the architectural diversity to be seen.

The cow barn itself required an agricultural generation engaged in a hands-on work ethic of high intensity labor twice a day, every day. Except for Gould Farm here, the cow barns have been adapted to other uses. Yet they still stand, often on fallow land, as though stubborn icons to remind us of a passing epoch in Monterey history.

— George B. Emmons

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Back to the Drawing Board

To re-evaluate is to reconsider. For some, it is the art of reflection and regret. For others, it is a more proactive exercise. My time at home over the holidays was sorely needed and as January 1, 2012, rolled around, I realized it was time to take stock and go back to the drawing board. I'd been allowing myself to wallow in a surprising amount of negativity and frustration—even malcontent. The first weekend back in DC, I went out and purchased a whiteboard the size of a small dining room table and a large pack of makers and a dry eraser. Then, I started writing categories: ideas and ideals, writing venues, organizations, fellowships, graduate school programs, reading lists, to-dos, and more. Almost every day, I carve out whiteboard time. It helps me reflect on the day and place my experiences in a literal space where I can see the wider implications for, and connections to, my own dreams and ambitions.

Part of this exercise is therapeutic because it reminds me that I can set personal very high expectations for myself, especially when my working environment no longer adequately fills that role. When I brainstorm and look at a big picture, it's an instant adrenaline rush. For example, what if a project at work could inspire a research thesis for graduate school? Better yet, what if getting a research card for the Library of Congress could enable me to get working on the theoretical background and literature review for the thesis? Or, as I embrace the realization that I care about multiple social issues, how can I build a voice for myself in the wider progressive space that carries the same tone across the policy continuum? Where should I try and posts blogs; what is my frame and lens when considering these issues?

This whiteboard keeps me honest and reminds me that my current position is a finite period of time in a larger journey that I can still design and pursue. It helps me remember the benefits of the job while looking for ways to connect it to goals I want to accomplish in the years to come. For example, from the individuals I've met so far, who can answer questions about possible future opportunities in education? Or, which experiences form the most compelling connections to future positions? Finally, it is about trying new things and moving beyond my comfort zone. It is time I ask myself to step up and try to accomplish some goals even if I find them intimidating. I refuse to be complacent, but I've been flirting with that option for way too long.

I have ten marker colors for the board, but no real coding logic. The only rule is that all 'questions' are in red: "What is the objective of this goal?" "What's next?" "How can I get there?" "What's my frame for this task?" Those questions draw my gaze and hold my focus; they keep me searching for common threads and building the coherent narrative. There is no one path to take and there is not a single decision upon which everything will hinge. I do not believe in just one door or window. Still, some are easier lifts than others. I've always enjoyed asking questions, but recently I know I've been slacking off and that goes against my personality and my upbringing.

Along with this whiteboard writing, I made a list of resolutions this year. There are ten, and in sum, they touch almost every aspect of my life. I typed them and printed them out, signed and dated the paper, and sealed it up. I'll open it on December 31, 2012, as midnight closes in, and I'll reflect on this year, the ups and downs and the triumphs and failures, because all of those will inevitably happen. It is a check-in and I find writing letters to myself helpful because we all change over time. Just recently, I found a letter I wrote to myself, and all it says on the envelope is "To be opened when you turn 25." I have no idea what's in the letter or when I wrote it. Perhaps I'm preparing for old age already. I hit the quarter-century mark this year and I'm looking forward to the chance to read and reflect. Resolutions serve a similar purpose when done in a positive, constructive manner.

In the meantime, it's time to "Carpe diem," as Ben Franklin might say. My tenth and final resolution reflects the spirit in which I hope to approach this year, and I'd like to think it reflects a growing commitment to adventure, spontaneity, and possibility: Take a few risks in the name of living so that I may never regret not having tried.

— Tarsi Dunlop

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"Garden Gastation"
What's Cooking from Monterey Gardens & Farms

Basket O' Beans

Our own dried beans! There are so many varieties of dry beans to grow every year it's hard to decide. Growing dry beans is a bit new to us. We've been growing green beans (mostly pole beans) as long as I can remember, but a while ago I decided it would be great to grow some of our own protein since we don't raise any meat animals here, yet. It may be a bit laborious at certain stages of dry-bean production but the inattention during the height of the growing season makes up for it. Growing beans is great for the soil, bringing up nitrogen for future plants. Growing beans is also easy! It's the seed we have our preschoolers start with to learn how a plant unveils itself. There are so many varieties of dry beans: black turtle, kidney, cannellini, calypso, Saturday night specials, Vermont Cranberry to name a few of the varieties we've grown. Some of their lineages go back a long way.

The beauty of growing your own beans, besides the fact that you know exactly how they've been grown and handled, is that the bushy bean plants grow up and look luscious all summer long, and all you have to do is weed. There's not even much of that: the plants fill out enough so that there is little weeding to do once they are established. There's no harvesting whilst there are bushels of other veggies

Stephen Moore

creeping into the kitchen, and they make the garden look SO productive. However, there is a small setback: the beans are small, and when the pod removal is done, there aren't piles of beans like there are piles of zucchini. It amazes me that beans are so inexpensive in the supermarkets. These are delicious, nutritious nuggets that will keep almost indefinitely with little attention.

We've been letting our beans stay on the plant for as long as possible into the fall. We have had some issues, particularly this past fall that was so wet. All of the heavy rain knocked the bean-laden plants to the ground, and mold was an issue. We've also had some small critters helping themselves. When the plants have played out their life, we remove the entire plants by cutting or pulling and hang them upside down in our shed to dry further.

Stephen and I have been unsuccessfully trying a number of ways to "quickly" remove the beans from the pods, which included unsightly jumping and stomping, but have now decided to keep things simpler. When the pods are "crunchy," it's time to pluck them off of the dry hanging plants and then invite your friends over for a good movie and hand everyone a basket full of bean pods to open. I find quite a bit of pleasure cracking open the pods and releasing the beautiful little treasures inside. We like to store them in glass jars so we can see the beautiful colors of the beans. Although the beans take a bit of time to soak and then cook, it is well worth the effort. If you are often in a time crunch, beans can be soaked overnight, cooked to tender, and then frozen in their broth to be used later in soups, drained and wrapped up in burritos, or served alongside some rice and homemade salsa.

But when the weather is cold outside, there's nothing like baked beans to warm the house. I remember my mother baking beans almost every Saturday night growing up, and they were (and still are) a staple at summer picnics. The smell of the beans baking is reason enough to make a batch.

Mom's Baked Beans

The following is a *guideline* recipe. Taste the liquid before baking the beans down or just trust the recipe. I most always have some molasses for the rich brown color and delicious flavor. Baking beans is easy but does take time in the oven; therefore, if you are going to make them, make at least 2 pounds of beans (double the recipe below). The baked beans freeze beautifully.

Underlined ingredients can be grown locally or found at local winter farmers markets**.**

For 1 poundof dry beans (calypso, yellow-eyed peas, navy, Saturday night specials, etc.):
1/4 pound salt pork, fatback, bacon (this

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is for flavor and can be omitted for a vegetarian version)
1 cup sweetener (molasses, brown sugar, maple syrup)
1 medium onion, diced
2 Tablespoons mustard (coarsely ground Dijon style)
1/3 cup ketchup

Pick out bad beans and stones, rinse good beans in colander or pot. Place beans in a large saucepot that is ovenproof, cover by 2" with water, and let soak overnight. Next day: Drain beans and add fresh water to cover beans. Add salt pork, fatback, or bacon. Cover pot and bring beans to a boil, reduce to a simmer (may need to lift lid a bit), and cook beans 1–2 hours or until soft. Beans should be easily squished between your fingers.

Add in all remaining ingredients and stir well; taste liquid. Add additional amounts of ingredients to taste, if desired. Bake beans in 325-degree oven uncovered for at least 3–6 hours or until desired consistency. Stir beans every hour or so. Beans will continue to soak up liquid a bit as they cool. More water can always be added when reheating baked beans.

Happy Beaning. I'm trying to refrain from all of the little bean ditties: Beans, beans the magical fruit . . .

—Wendy G. Jensen
wendygj@gmail.com

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Monterey Library Notes

The Monterey Library wants to make sure that anyone who has difficulty getting to the library to pick up materials, especially our senior citizens, can still borrow library items. Now that we belong to CWMARS, if you have access to a computer you can put holds on books and other items from your home, and we'll bring them to you when they come, in at your request. I know some of you aren't able for various reasons to order items on the computer—so feel free to call during the library's open hours and ask any staff member to find and put holds on something you would like to borrow. There's a good chance we won't have everything on your list, but there's a better chance we can get it—and if you aren't able to get here we will bring it to you.

It's not too late for any kids who like to read to join in on the fun of our youth book discussion clubs. We have a young group of beginning readers and an older group as well, so all reading abilities are welcome. The groups meet once a month, and all that you need to do is enjoy reading—our group leaders will help you have a fun evening in the library. The younger group has been focusing on Roald Dahl—please call 528-3795 to find out when the next meeting is and what you should read—or just check out the library calendar on the website to find out when the meeting is and just show up. The highlight of the year is a pizza party with the families and a talent show—many people who just happened to be in the library were amazed at the talent of these kids and had a very enjoyable evening. Don't miss out on all the fun!

— Mark Makuc, Library Director

January Wildlife Report

At the end of December, an otter visited the Schwartz/Firth family out on Chestnut Hill Road. They'd seen otters for the first time at their new place right after their first Christmas there, in 2009, and looked eagerly in 2010 but got no visit then. In 2011, on Dec. 27, Lucien looked out the window in the morning and there was the otter on the little pond near the house, diving repeatedly, staying under for about a minute each time, and coming right up on the ice once.

In the same neighborhood, Bella August and Belvin Williams had an end-of-the-year visit from a big coyote, "very gray in coloring, sharp upstanding ears," which crossed the yard and moved into the woods toward Chestnut Hill. They have a neighbor who has told them of a pack of coyotes, a small bear cub treed by his dog, and a large moose on the road.

Over on Blue Hill Road, Ted Warner has seen a flock of bluebirds harassing grey squirrels in a maple by his house. He has also had three daytime owl sightings: one on Christmas Day and two since then. He thinks there may be a pair of owls.

Our global wildlife trotter, Steve Snyder, sends word of an early January sighting along a road through a marsh. He saw a monitor lizard—this was in Ivory Coast (Cote d'Ivoire), Africa.

Send me your wildlife news. There's no wildness too small, too large, nor too far afield. Thanks.

— Bonner McAllester,
528-9385. bmca@berkshire.net

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Why Harvest Trees at the Bidwell House Museum?

Timber harvesting, and forest management in general, can be a controversial subject. Many people have argued that timber harvesting is unsightly and there is no reason to harvest timber in Massachusetts' special forests. However, *silviculture*—applied forest ecology—as applied in the realm of *forestry*—the art and science of managing forests for a sustainable flow of forest benefits—helps to ensure that forests and woodlots are able to meet the multiple demands that their owners, and society, place on them over time.

The forests are part of a working landscape

Since the settlement of Monterey in the mid-1700s, people have worked the land to meet their needs. As the population increased, the pace of land clearing rapidly increased until the mid 1800s, when most of the land in Monterey was cleared for agriculture; six sawmills in town and many others nearby used the harvested trees. Since the late 1800s and early 1900s, as farms were abandoned, forests gradually reclaimed abandoned agricultural land, and by 2005 Monterey was 84% forested (MassGIS). At the Bidwell House, the forest is the only part of the original farm that is still in active agricultural use and contributing income. Forestry contributes significantly to the funds needed to sustain the museum.

Forest Management in Massachusetts

Massachusetts only harvests approximately 2% of the volume of wood it consumes. Timber harvesting in Massachusetts has been declining since the mid-1980s, as a result of many factors: increasing development and forest parcelization, a decline in interest and jobs in the forest industry, and changing attitudes about environmental awareness. Forest inventory data shows that Massachusetts harvests about 0.5% of its total timber-growing stock on timberland every year, and timber harvesting in Massachusetts only occurs on about 0.8% of its forest area annually. Reducing production of forest products here means increasing reliance on imports, from places that do not regulate timber harvesting as well. Massachusetts has some of the best and most stringent timber-harvesting regulations in the country, and the world. From 1984–2003, there were 118 timber harvests on 3,597 acres in Monterey, harvesting approximately 9,400 thousand board feet and 4,300 cords of timber. In nominal non-inflation adjusted dollars, these harvests generated approximately $1.3 million of revenue for landowners, $1.0 million in logging wages, and $379,000 in trucking wages. This activity helped to sustain a rural, sustainable, natural resource-based economy, rather than one based on land-use change and development.

Forest Management Principles for the Bidwell House

The Bidwell House has had an active forestry program since the mid-1990s. The forests that developed after agricultural clearing are relatively uniform in age and structure. One goal of forest management is to increase diversity, both in tree ages and species composition. This is similar to the way farmers avoid monocultures, which are susceptible to disease. The science-based silviculture used on the Bidwell woodlands—developed by licensed foresters, approved by the board of directors, and carried out by licensed harvesters—creates patches of young forest, half to three acres in size.

• This helps maintain water quality by ensuring that rainfall and snowmelt have a healthy, actively growing forest to absorb nutrients and trap sediment before it reaches streams and water bodies.

• Patches of young, regenerating forest help to provide habitat for wildlife species dependent on brushy areas, some of which have been in decline in Massachusetts since open areas have decreased and forestland has increased over the past one hundred years, while snags and coarse woody debris retained after the harvest provide additional habitat structural elements.

• Money is not the primary objective. In fact, good silviculture requires removing many trees that are of no value because they are diseased, or damaged by the ice storm in December 2008, to allow seeds to germinate. Some trees with no timber value, however, are left for wildlife dens or perch sites.

• The timber harvest is part of a long-term plan, including special or sensitive areas consciously set aside from timber harvesting. The current harvest began in 2005 and is scheduled to conclude this winter. The next harvest might take place in twenty to forty years.

What About the Mess?

There is no question that the wood left on the ground after the harvest is unsightly. However, the decomposing wood keeps nutrients on site, as opposed to chipping and removing them. Additionally, slash piles near wetlands help create cool, moist places for salamanders and amphibians to seek shelter from midday heat; and brush in other areas prevents deer from eating young seedlings.

— William R. VanDoren,
Licensed Forester

Please call or email the museum if you have any questions: bidwellhouse@gmail.com, 528-6888.

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From the Meetinghouse . . .

Heroes

Heroes: who are they? By choice, through inexplicable accidents, or even serendipity, they're the ones who find themselves in challenging circumstances and do what needs to be done. Who don't have to stand in witness, but do. Who could stay to benefit from others' expense, but walk away. Who say yes to that inexplicable knowing which will not be denied: *Oh. This job is mine.*

Heroes. Are they always someone else, or are they sometimes you and I? Maybe that depends on who your personal heroes are. Mine include Nelson Mandela and Mark Barone.

Haven't heard of that last one? He was born in western New York State, but lived on the West Coast for a couple of decades. Eleven autumns ago, back east from Oregon to visit family and do some leaf peeping, he ran into the supervisor from the local branch of the company they both worked for. Conversation got interesting when the man suggested a transfer back to the western New York office. "Can't promise anything, but it would be great to have you back here," Mark was told.

It suited what he wanted for a next step, so he put in a transfer request as soon as he got back to Portland. Just a few weeks later, he'd begun to settle in back east. What he didn't fully realize at the time was that this geographical shift also put him in place to be primary caregiver for his aging mother for more than the next eight years.

He'd realized that she was going to need help, of course, and he was glad to do it. His mother was in her eighties, healthy and actively involved with a network of family and friends, so for the first few years that help only meant a visit once or twice a week, and keeping her financial records straight. Then he noticed subtle changes in her driving. Eventually, there were the not-so-subtle changes that required him and his out-of-town sister to orchestrate the "It's Time To Retire the Car Keys" family intervention. By then he'd been visiting daily for quite a while.

Less than a year later, his mother had been hospitalized, released, readmitted, and he and his sister had agreed on an assisted-living facility where their mom then lived for almost three years. He continued to visit every day, maintained her house and property as well as her finances, and kept to his role as health-care advocate.

When the next steps in care became necessary, her time in the hospital and then in full nursing care were mercifully brief. Through it all, his compassion for his mother's suffering was the rudder with which he navigated all the events that came his way on her behalf. When, periodically through the ups and downs of those years, I asked him how he was doing—he's my brother, after all—he'd say, "Mar, I don't know why, but this is easy for me. It just feels right to do it." This although he was also the first to admit it had never occurred to him that the work would be his for so long. Mom's parents had each died within weeks after a stroke, and her sister had died of a massive heart attack.

"I figured I'd be here for a year or two and then move back to the West Coast," he'd said. But he didn't. By the time Mom died, three years ago this month, he'd been back east so long that back east had become home again.

It's simple, really, developing a sustained compassion for those who suffer. It just takes the same skill for acknowledging our shared humanity that some folks say good writers share: *"Writing? It's easy. You just sit down and open a vein . . ."* In other words, sustained compassion is a gift we give to others through a chink in our armor; we expose that place where our own woundedness prompts us to say, "I know what it is to hurt. How can I help?"

It's a place we all scramble to conceal. It's a place within us that can feel so real, so difficult, so daunting, that whole systems of thought, of ethics, and of religious belief have been based on clarifying one question: *how do I stay present in the face of suffering?*

Nevertheless, we've probably all asked at one time or another, "How can I help?" We've probably all acted on that question, too. In other words, you and I don't have to be wannabe Nelson Mandelas in order to be heroes. We can do better than that. We can, like my brother, just strive to be as authentic and compassionate as we are able, up and down, successfully and not, day after day.

Heroes. Sometimes their names and their deeds have international cachet. Sometimes they're just regular members of the family. Betcha know more than one.

— Mary Kate Jordan

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Political Musings from Monterey
Activism Paying Dividends

The general public often seems to have a sense of trepidation about activist movements. What are they seeking? Are they independent, or will they be co-opted? Are they naively hopeful, or do they have a chance to force true change? Will those in power even listen? In the past weeks, some of those doubts have been muted, or at least softened. In the face of intense grassroots pressure, the Keystone XL pipeline has been rejected and the congressional progress of SOPA and PIPA has ground to a halt.

The two narratives have major differences. Keystone XL protests took place over months and involved hundreds of thousands of people on the streets and online. They were mobilized by environmental groups and concerned citizens who refused to be complacent about the construction of a new fossil fuel pipeline that would transport some of the dirtiest energy on the planet through environmentally sensitive areas of Nebraska. On the other side were the forces of big oil, the Canadian government, and concerned citizens who desired more jobs regardless of the collateral damage. Ultimately, the imposition of a more stringent timeline as part of the payroll tax cut extension forced Obama to deny the permit or face legal repercussions. It's a convenient position: he will receive praise from the environmentalists and have a decent defense of his decision to pipeline advocates.

The backlash against SOPA and PIPA has been in the public eye far more. They started out as bipartisan bills backed by the powerful music and film lobbies. The main issue: any websites could be censored or shut down for the suspicion of containing pirated content or copyright violations. In other words, user-generated content could precipitate the closure of Wikipedia, Facebook, YouTube, and hundreds of other frequently used websites. When the details emerged, activists and Internet businesses responded forcefully. Wikipedia shut down entirely in protest, and Google posted a petition that garnered millions of signatures in a single day. Why was the response more robust than the backlash against Keystone? As an issue of civil liberties, the campaign against the bills proved unifying, while debates framed as environment vs. economy are inherently divisive. The bipartisan support became bipartisan opposition almost overnight, and the freedom of the Internet was preserved.

However, both stories were examples of the strength of concentrated activism to influence public policy, definitive proof that common principles can be upheld via the democratic system even when power and money congregate on the opposing side. What victories will activism achieve in the remainder of this year? Although it remains to be seen, one thing is sure—the recent successes have kindled fresh hope in many who are involved in the political process.

— Jonah Carlson

To read more of Jonah's musings, visit www.politicalmusingsfrommonterey.com.

P.O. Box 9 01245

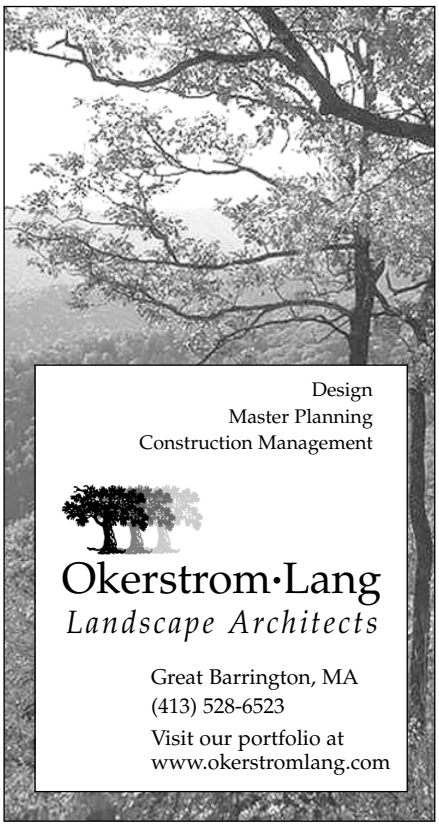
Health Insurance and Employee Compensation

To the Editor:

Last July, Governor Patrick signed municipal health care reform legislation to provide "significant and immediate savings to cities and towns." An Act Relative To Municipal Health Insurance, according to the Administration's press release, empowers cities and towns to negotiate health insurance costs and "is an important step in the Administration's efforts to bring health care system costs down."

Nationally, the employer/employee health insurance premium split now averages 73/27 (see a Kaiser Foundation study cited in the *New York Times*), and the average deductible rose to $1,200 in 2010 (*Wall Street Journal*). Massachusetts state employees pay 25% of their premium (20% if they were hired before July 2003); they are also subject to an annual $250-per-person deductible, not to exceed $750 per family.

In South County, Tyringham, Sheffield, Otis, Stockbridge, and Egremont have a 75/25 split on health insurance



premiums; Alford, with one fulltime employee, has a 90/10 split; Great Barrington has an 80/20 split; New Marlborough has a 70/30 split; and the Southern Berkshire Regional School District has a 75/25 or 80/20 split, depending on the plan.

Monterey currently offers its seven fulltime employees a 90/10 split, with no deductible.

This fall town officials considered how we might offer a very competitive compensation package in light of the realities of health insurance costs. The fulltime employees were polled with several options that would bring those costs in line without reducing their total compensation. They refused to fill out the survey and instead presented the town with a list of demands, including, among others: longevity pay, on-call pay, a boot allowance for the highway crew, paid work-from-home snow days for the interdepartmental secretary, and negotiated raises backed by a three-year contract.

During the ensuing meetings, a range of opinions were offered. One board member said the issue of health insurance should never have been broached; several other current and former town officials said the town could afford to give and *should give* the employees whatever they wanted; and several employees suggested that united, the boards together could get any proposal passed at town meeting. It was also suggested that health insurance costs were an insignificant part of the budget.

Health insurance costs continue to rise much faster than inflation or wages, and current health insurance obligations cost the town nearly $120,000, a large percentage of the $455,000 total compensation for fulltime employees, not including overtime.

When it became clear disagreements remained about the details of the proposal, and even about the meaning of "compromise" in negotiations, the employees requested executive session for contract negotiations.

With no support from my fellow Select Board members, Finance Committee members, or the fulltime employees to continue negotiating a competitive compensation package in public meeting, I resigned.

My personal opinion is that the parties in this months-long negotiation are unable to read the writing on the wall regarding health insurance costs, and that my responsibility as a (former) public official is to ensure that voters at least have an opportunity to read it for themselves. What they decide to offer the fulltime employees is up to them. We work at their pleasure.

In any case, I want to express my deepest affection for the residents of Monterey. For ten years you have all provided me with a heartening sense of purpose and an enormously satisfying sense of community. I've come to know so many of you, and shared so much with you, I'm only sorry I can't mention you all by name. You know who you are.

I'll miss being your public servant, but my family and I look forward to many more years as your neighbors.

With the best of wishes,

— Jonathan Sylbert

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Save Our School

To the Editor:

Monterey School is under siege again (due to the superintendent's quest to level fund the budget) but this time we have the company of two other towns, South Egremont and New Marlborough. The Superintendent and School Committee of the SBRSD are holding public hearings, and the school committee will be deciding on February 27 if our towns should put to the ballot (at town meeting) the closing of the outlying schools. A super majority of the school committee would be needed to push the question further. As long as four members vote against the closing proposal it will not pass.

Let your select board know how you feel about this issue as well as your school committee representative, Deborah Mielke.

If enough people are willing to come forward and try to be creative about the schools and their funding, perhaps we can come up with a forward-thinking vision and work with the school committee. Right now the outlying towns are being pitted against Sheffield, and this is not helping to solve our problems within the district or create a secure future for the aging smaller schools.

If you have Facebook you can visit the site Friends of the Little Schools.

If you have a child you want to send to Monterey school who may be eligible for Early Kindergarten or Kindergarten next year (2012–13) call Terry Palfini at 413-229-8754 and let her know you would like to register your child in the Monterey School. She is the assistant to the principal at Undermountain Elementary. That office oversees the Kindergarten registration for the district.

There is strength in numbers but you have to let your voice be heard.

— Mary Makuc

Monterey Library Recent Arrivals

The following books and movies are newly released and in high demand by all users of CWMARS. If you'd like to borrow these items you will probably need to place a hold on them through your CWMARS account. For various reasons, including poor connectivity, we understand you may not be able to do this yourself. Please stop in to the library or call 528-3795 during open hours and the staff will be glad to place the hold, or you can email the library at montereylibrary@gmail.com.

DVDs

The Greening of Whitney Brown
The Guard
The Last Lions
Courageous
The Ides of March
Mysteries of Lisbon
Sliders: Fifth and Final Season

Adult Fiction

The Hunter, John Lescroart
The Captive Heart, Dale Cramer
Breakdown, Sara Paretsky
The Darkening Field, William Ryan
The Little Russian, Susan Sherman
The Fallout Plan, Leigh Stein
The Street Sweeper, Elliot Perlman
Death of Kings, Bernard Cornwell
The Rope, Anna Pigeon
The Orphan Masters Son, Adam Johnson
Red Means Run, Brad Smith
Need You Now, James Grippando
The World We Found, Thrity Umrigar
Start Shooting, Charlie Newton
Believing The Lie, Elizabeth George
The Winter Palace: Novel of Catherine the Great, Eva Stachniak
Friends Like Us, Lauren Fox
Raylan, Elmore Leonard
Mr. G, Alan Lightman
An Available Man, Hilma Wolitzer
Grown Up Kind of Pretty, Joshilyn Jackson
The Odds: A Love Story, Stewart O'Nan
The Silent Oligarch, Chris Morgan Jones

Adult Nonfiction

Scared Sick: The Role of Childhood Trauma in Adult Disease, Robin Karr-Morse
Gods Hotel: A Doctor, a Hospital, and a Pilgrimage to the Heart of Medicine, Victoria Sweet
The Best Care Possible, Ira Byock
Red Plenty, Francis Spufford
Brief History of Thought: A Philosophical Guide to Living, Luc Ferry
How Eskimos Keep Their Babies Warm and Other Adventures in Parenting Around the World, Mei-Ling Hopgood

Youth

A Million Suns, Beth Revis
Harness Horses, Bucking Broncos & Pit Ponies: A History of Horse Breeds, Jeff Crosby & Shelley Ann Jackson

Children Picture

Sister Bear: A Norse Tale, Jane Yolen & Linda Graves

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MontereyFest 2012, Aug. 18

MontereyFest 2012, scheduled for Saturday, August 18, is being designed to incorporate the most popular elements of past community programs—specifically *LakeFest* and *I Love Monterey Day*—into a single community event.

The day, which will focus on fun for children and adults alike, is a way to bring together all of the families of Monterey—both fulltime and part-time residents—to continue to build a spirit of camaraderie and inclusiveness, sharing and community pride. Residents are encouraged to submit ideas for events to be included in the day.

Volunteers are needed to help with all aspects of the program. Please contact Co-Chairs: Mayra Rodriguez, rodriguez.mayra77@yahoo.com, or Dorene Beller, dorenebeller@yahoo.com.

Contributors

We thank the following folks for their recent contributions. Your support makes it possible for us to keep on going.

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Sandy & Rita Gottlieb
Arthur & Joan Wing
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Personal Coaching

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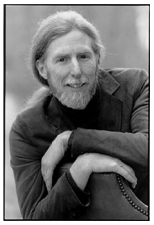

Berkshirecoaching.com
413-528-7914

Calendar

Every Monday except holidays: Select Board meeting, Town Hall. Start time 9 am (note new time).

Every Tuesday: Zumba Class, 5:30–6:30 pm, Monterey Firehouse. $10/class.

Saturday, February 4: Opening reception for *Cropped*, an exhibition of works by Gould Farm artists, 7–9 pm, Knox Gallery, Monterey Library. The exhibit will be on display until March 5.

Wednesday, February 8: School Committee Public Hearing on school closures, 7 pm, Mt. Everett High School, Sheffield.

Thursday, February 9: Free Blood Pressure Clinic with Berkshire Visiting Nurse Assoc., Town Hall Meeting Room, 2–3 pm.

Saturday, February 11:

Monterey Democratic Party Caucus, 11 am, Meetinghouse basement.

Vikki True in concert, 7 pm, Knox Trail Inn, Otis. Free, sponsored by Otis Cultural Council.

Tuesday, February 14: Republican Town Committee Meeting, 4 pm, Meetinghouse basement. See p. 7.

Wednesday, February 15: Potluck Dinner, 6 pm, Monterey Meetinghouse Fellowship Hall. Program to be determined. All welcome.

Monday, February 20:

Presidents' Day. Town Offices, Library closed.

Annual Town Skating Party hosted by Park Commission, 1–3 pm, Firehouse Pavilion. Skating, games, food, drinks, fun!

Saturday, February 25: Square and contra dancing, 8:30–11:30 pm, Dewey Hall, Rt. 7, Sheffield. Music by Mountain Laurel, caller Fern Bradley. All dances are taught; beginners and children are welcome. Adults $8–10, children $5. Information 528-9385.

Monday, February 27:

Adult book group will discuss *Blue Highways* by William Least Heat-Moon, 7:30 pm, Monterey Library. Newcomers welcome.

School Committee Meeting on school closures, 6 pm, Mt. Everett High School, Sheffield. See p. 2.

Saturday, March 3: Republican Caucus, 1:30 pm, Meetinghouse basement.

Monterey News

The *Monterey News* is an independent nonprofit corporation dedicated to fostering communication in the Monterey community. Our editorial address is P. O. Box 9, Monterey, MA, 01245. We invite signed letters, articles, drawings, poetry, and photographs. Address requests for advertising rates and further information to the Editor, or telephone us at 413-528-4347 or e-mail montereynews9@gmail.com.

The Observer
December 26 – January 25

High temp. (1/7)	54°
Low temp. (1/15)	-6°
Avg. high temp.	34.3°
Avg. low temp.	16.3°
Avg. temp.	25.3°
Total precipitation (rain and melted snow)	2.69 in.
Snowfall	12 in.

Precipitation occurred on 22 days.

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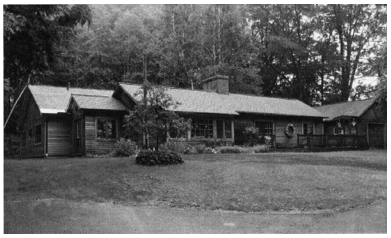

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Contributions from local artists this month:
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Tristian Goik, 15; Bonner McAllester, 16; MaryPaul Yates, 14.

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